



President Theodore Roosevelt established the Rio Grande National Forest by Presidential Proclamation in 1908. The Rio Grande, like others in the 191,000,000 acre National Forest System, is administered by the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, for a variety of uses and values. The Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act of 1960 directs that all National Forests be managed to provide wood products, high quality wildlife and fish habitat, good grazing for domestic livestock, recreation opportunities including wilderness, and pure water for domestic, industrial, and irrigation use. The Forest Service strives to maintain a balanced pattern of land use under the multiple use principle. In this manner, no single use dominates the Forest and the wide range of public and individual needs can be better met on a long-term basis.

Today, the Rio Grande National Forest includes almost two million acres of publicly owned land on the eastern slope of the Continental Divide. Parts of two spectacular mountain ranges, the San Juan and the Sangre de Cristo, are within the Forest. Also included are the headwaters of the third longest river in the United States--the Rio Grande del Norte, or "Great River of the North," as it was known by the early Spanish and Indian inhabitants of the Southwest.

Summer temperatures on the Forest rarely exceed 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Winter temperatures are often 30 degrees Fahrenheit or lower. Normally, the frost-free period is about 90 days per year.

Between the ranges with their 14,000-foot summits is the fertile San Luis Valley, one of several high "parks" or basins in Colorado ringed by mountains. The Communities of Alamosa, Del Norte, Monte Vista, Saguache, Antonito, and others, are reminders of the area's long and colorful heritage, while names such as Bonanza, Wagon Wheel Gap, Creede, and Summitville are part of an equally colorful but more recent history.

Variety is the word describing the outdoor recreation opportunities of the Rio Grande National Forest. From the rugged and jagged peaks of the Sangre de Cristos to the forested tablelands and glacial canyons of the San Juans, the outdoor enthusiast can choose an activity suited to the day or the season.

High lakes and tumbling streams beckon the fisherman, while big game and other wildlife lure the hunter or nature photographer. Hiking, backpacking, and camping amid spectacular scenery await the visitor to the Weminuche, South San Juan, Sangre de Cristo or La Garita Wilderness. The Trail along the Continental Divide, or the rugged Sangre de Cristo backcountry, is equally exciting and challenging.

A good network of Forest highways and roads provides access for the auto traveler, with some fifty Forest Service recreation sites located in convenient spots. Other recreation opportunities include horseback riding, skiing, snowmobiling, or nature study. History buffs may enjoy a thrilling ride on the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad, a narrow gauge steam route from Antonito, Colorado to Chama, New Mexico. Evidence of early day mining camps is scattered throughout the Forest, while Creede, Bonanza, Platoro, and Summitville are centers of continuing mineral activity. The routes of early explorer Juan Bautista de Anza, and later ones such a Zebulon Pike and John C. Fremont can be traced with a little imagination and effort.

Although each season in the Rockies has a special charm, autumn on the Rio Grande is unequalled. The yellows and golds of the "quaking" or "trembling" aspen blanket the slopes and benches, the air is crisp, the sky a deep blue, and the visitor will find few crowds and little congestion.

As you travel the National Forest, perhaps exploring "out of the way" places and historical sites, remember that the structures, buildings, and land are often privately owned. Please respect the rights and privacy of residents and, if in doubt about a particular site, check with the nearest District Ranger.

Planning

Carefully planning your trip ahead of time will ensure a safe, relaxing and enjoyable experience. Plan your trip using a good map and leave an itinerary with someone at home in case someone has to search for you. The 25-cent fee on each hunting or fishing license helps pay for searches and rescues. The fund also pays for searches and rescues of people with a Colorado registered boat, snowmobile or off-highway vehicle and their families. All requests for search and rescue funds are made by the county sheriff.

Rio Grande National Forest Service Offices are located at:

Rio Grande Supervisor's Office 1803 W. Highway 160 Monte Vista, CO 81144 (719) 852-5941	Conejos Peak RD 15571 County Road T-5 La Jara, CO 81140 (719) 274-8971
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Divide Ranger District 13308 W. Highway 160 Del Norte, CO 81132 (719) 657-2532	Divide RD (Creede) Box 270 Creede, CO 81130 (719) 658-2556
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Saguache Ranger District  
46525 State Highway 114  
Saguache, CO 81140  
(719) 655-2547

**Maps:** The Rio Grande National Forest map will provide all the necessary information you need to make plans to visit specific areas of the Forest. The Rio Grande National Forest maps are color coded to show which lands are National Forest, Wilderness, Bureau of Land Management, State Forest and private. These maps also have all of the roads, trails, campgrounds, streams and lakes. The Rio Grande National Forest maps are available at all Rio Grande National Forest Offices, The San Luis Valley Information Center in Monte Vista and many local businesses.

**USGS Topographical maps** may be purchased from USGS, P.O. Box 25286, Denver Federal Center, Denver, CO. 80225 (303) 202-4700. Some of the local Sporting Goods Stores also sell USGS Topographical maps. Another source of maps of the area is the Bureau of Land Management. Their address is 2850 Youngfield, Lakewood, CO. 80215, (303) 239-3600.

Some valuable assets to have whenever you travel in the mountains are:

- Flashlight
- First aid kit
- Nylon cord
- Dark glasses
- Water bottles
- Map and compass
- Swiss Army knife
- Waterproof matches
- Signal mirror or whistle
- Space blanket or poncho
- Extra non-perishable food





## CAMPING

**Developed Campgrounds:** Visitors may stay in a developed campground site for up to 14 days unless otherwise posted. Developed campgrounds usually include: Tables, Toilets, Fire Grates, Garbage Cans and Parking Spurs. Water, sewage, and electrical hookups for recreation vehicles are not available. Some campgrounds may require payment of a nominal use fee. Current information on fees can be obtained from the nearest District Ranger Station.

The main campground use season is from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend. Some campgrounds are operated under a Reservation System while other campsites are available on a first-come first-serve basis. Campgrounds that are on the Reservation System have a few spaces that are first-come first-serve basis. Campsites that are on the Reservation System may be reserved up to 240 days in advance by calling (877) 444-6777 which is a toll free number, or on the Internet at <http://ReserveUSA.com>.

Each District keeps a few campgrounds open during the big game hunting season. Availability of water during fall hunting season is dependent on how cold the nights are getting and danger of waterlines freezing.

Forest Officers and County Sheriffs periodically patrol most campgrounds and are happy to provide information and assistance to forest users.

**Undeveloped Camping:** Where developed parking and camping areas are not available, direct access to suitable sites within 300 feet of an open road is authorized. Such travel is not allowed if otherwise prohibited or if it would damage the land or streams. Please select your route carefully and do not cut live trees.

Never camp in meadows or soft grassy areas that compact easily. Pick a place where you won't have to clear vegetation or level a tent site. Before leaving camp, naturalize the area. Try to make the site look as if no one had been there.

Select campsites whenever possible that are designated or already well established. Unless otherwise posted, camp at least 100 feet or more from lakes, streams, meadows, trails and "beauty spots." Never dig ditches around your tent as these will cause soil erosion. Keep soaps and detergents out of lakes and streams. Wash dishes and clothes in a pot and dispose of the wastewater on rocky soil at least 100 feet from the nearest water supply. Bathe in the same manner. Do not bathe in lakes or streams. Carry a trowel or small shovel to bury human waste at least 6 to 8 inches deep and 100 feet away from camp, trails and water sources. Stay as few nights as possible in one place before moving to a new site as this will cause less damage to the area. Practice pack it in, pack it out.

## BARRIER-FREE ACCOMMODATION

**BIG MEADOWS CAMPGROUND:** Big Meadows Campground is 1-1/2 miles west of Highway 160 on Big Meadows Forest Access Road. Big Meadows Access Road is 27-1/2 miles west of Del Norte Ranger District. Sites 6, 7, 8 are handicap accessible sites. Each site has a handicap trail that leads down to the Lake Shore. At the entrance to the campground, there is a parking lot with a handicap trail that leads to the lakeshore where there is a handicap-fishing pier. These campsites can be reserved through the reservation system.

**TRUJILLO MEADOWS CAMPGROUND:** Trujillo Meadows Campground is 37 miles west of Antonito on Highway 17 then 5 miles up Forest Road #118. Site 21 is handicap accessible. The campsites in this campground are strictly first-come first-serve.



## CAMPFIRES

Never leave a campfire unattended. In most cases, it is better to carry a lightweight stove rather than building a fire. If you decide that you would prefer to build a fire, be sure to check for local fire restrictions when you arrive. If fires are allowed, remember that fire can be extremely destructive. Build your fire only in safe sites away from trees and shrubs, preferably in Forest Service camp or picnic grounds. Outside of campgrounds and picnic areas, build the fire on sandy spots or hard ground since the scar is easier to hide. Burn small sticks gathered from the ground as these burn completely leaving good coals for cooking and the ashes are easier to scatter. Avoid encircling the fire with rock as the rocks may explode from intense heat and the blackened rocks are hard to conceal.

Before you leave, always make sure that your fire is dead out. The ashes should be cold to the touch. Scatter the ashes and rocks. You can also help reduce the expense of maintaining the National Forest by "packing your trash" out with you when you leave.

## LEAVE NO TRACE ETHICS

Pack it in, Pack it out. Leave no Trace practices are techniques that visitors can use to help reduce evidence of their presence in the backcountry. By following the Leave No Trace land ethic, visitors can enjoy backcountry and wilderness areas while preserving their beauty and solitude.

If our wildlands are to exist for future generations to enjoy, we recommend that people using the National Forests adopt and teach to others the backcountry ethic of "take only photographs and leave only footprints." Avoid removing items of interest (rocks, flowers, wood or antlers). Leave these in their natural state for others to see.

## WEATHER

When camping at higher elevations, remember that nights get colder and days get hotter, therefore, bring clothing suitable for warm weather and cold weather. You are far wiser to dress in layers. That way you can add or remove layers as the temperature changes. Hypothermia (exposure) is the loss of body heat faster than it is being produced, causing the body's inner-core temperature to drop. Deaths from hypothermia have been recorded when temperatures never dropped below 50 degrees Fahrenheit. When clothes become wet, they lose about 90 per cent of their insulating value. Wind blowing through wet clothes greatly increases loss of body heat. Hypothermia can produce lapses in memory, errors in judgment, clumsiness and loss of coordination. The victim is unaware that these mental effects are happening!

## ALTITUDE

The Rio Grande area ranges in elevation from 8,000 feet on the San Luis Valley floor to more than 14,000 feet at the summit of some mountain peaks.

Visitors coming from lower elevations may notice any of the following symptoms which indicate that they are not yet completely adapted to high altitudes: shortness of breath, general malaise (a "run-down" feeling), loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, and headache. These symptoms normally go away in 10 days to 6 weeks.

Mountain sickness, although extremely disagreeable, is not usually life-threatening to people in good physical condition. With mountain sickness you can feel all of the above symptoms as well as drowsiness, yawning, weakness and chilliness. A whitish pallor of the face, and a bluish tinge of the lips and fingernails may be noticed. Headache is frequent and may be severe. Even slight physical effort can produce troublesome shortness of breath. You may notice pounding or palpitations of the heartbeat. Sleep can be difficult, and respiration may assume the pattern of several very deep, rapid breaths followed by a period of shallow or even absent breathing, then deep, rapid breaths again. Dizziness, ringing in the ears, irritability, and memory defects may appear. Most of the symptoms of mountain sickness are due to the effect of lack of oxygen in the body's central nervous system and should disappear when you become better adapted to altitude. Most of the symptoms stop within 24 to 48 hours after arrival at altitude, although the shortness of breath, lack of appetite, and headache may persist.

High altitude pulmonary edema (HAPE) is also caused by lack of oxygen, and although apparently rare is extremely dangerous. Deaths have occurred within 6 to 10 hours from the onset of symptoms. Although the set of conditions which result in HAPE are very complex and poorly understood, diagnosis is not difficult. The classic symptoms are rapidly increasing shortness of breath and a dry cough which later produces a white, frothy sputum which may be streaked with blood. The victim is usually cyanotic (that is, blueness of the lips and nails is present). Bubbling sounds may be heard, as if the victim is breathing through liquid, as indeed he is. Pulmonary edema means that blood plasma has leaked into the air sacs of the lungs. Adequate acclimatization seems to be the best protections against HAPE. Above 10,000 feet at least one day should be allowed for each thousand feet of altitude gained. With HAPE and Mountain Sickness, plenty of fluid intake is extremely important. The treatment of choice for HAPE is immediate and rapid descent. Instances have been reported where normal breathing was restored only 2,000 feet lower than the altitude at which symptoms appeared.

## OUTFITTER/GUIDES

All commercial outfitters, guides and packers who operate on the National Forest must have a Special Use Permit issued by the United States Forest Service and must be licensed by the Colorado Outfitters Association. Additional information regarding outfitter/guides can be obtained at Forest Service District offices and the Colorado Outfitters' Association at (303) 841-7760. Also, institutional groups traveling into Wilderness areas are required to obtain an Institutional Use Permit even if nobody in the group is receiving wages or recompense for the trip.

## HIKING

Varied Terrain, magnificent scenery, and vast reaches of wild country await the hiker on the Rio Grande National Forest. The Rio Grande National Forest has 523.2 miles of trails in wilderness areas and 829.1 miles of trails in non-wilderness areas for a total of 1,352.3 miles of trails. The trails of the forest provide ideal routes for short day hikes or extended backpacking trips. Visitors should be aware that trails may not be well marked and a compass and current USGS topographic map should be part of each hikers gear. Don't pick flowers, dig up plants, cut lives branches from trees or take short cuts off the trails.

With the freedom that hiking and backpacking use offers, comes the responsibility to care for the environment and to respect the rights of other users. The complex ecological interrelationship in which our wildlands have existed for thousands of years can easily be upset or even destroyed by the careless recreationist. Once damaged, some fragile soils and plants may not recover in our children's lifetime.

Travel quietly in the backcountry, avoid clanging cups, yells and screams. Noise pollution lessens the chance of seeing wildlife and is objectionable to others seeking solitude. Wear "earth colors" to lessen your visual impact, especially if traveling in a group. During hunting season a blaze orange hat and vest are advisable for your personal safety.

Stay on the designated path when hiking or riding existing trails. Short cutting a switchback or avoiding a muddy trail by walking or riding in the grass causes unnecessary erosion and unsightly multiple paths. In the spring, travel across snow and rocks as much as possible; high mountain plants and soil are especially susceptible to damage during a thaw.

If you choose a route without trails, do not mark trees, build rock piles or leave messages in the dirt. A group should spread out rather than walk or ride one behind the other (especially in tundra or meadow areas). Ten people or horses tramping in a row can crush plant tissue beyond recovery and create channels for erosion.

Hike in groups of 4 to 6 people at most; four is the best number, especially during off-trail travel. In case of sickness or injury, one person can stay with the victim while two people go for help. Use your judgment in breaking your group into smaller units to reduce visual impact to increase individual enjoyment and self reliance.

Allow horses plenty of room on trails. Horses may be frightened by backpack equipment. It is best to move off the trail. Everyone in your group should stand off to the same side of the trail, the downhill side of the trail is best. Avoid sudden movements as horses pass.

### Trails in Conejos Peak Ranger District

Chama River Trail # 738 is a non-motorized trail that follows the Chama River to the confluence of the West and East Forks, for a splendid view of upper Chama Basin. The East Fork has very scenic terrain and passes several beaver ponds supporting trout. To hike the Chama River Trail, travel 7 miles north of Chama, New Mexico on Highway 17, take the Chama River Road #121, north for 6 miles through private property to the forest boundary. At the forest boundary, take the left fork of the road to the Chama River Camping Area. The trail is 4-1/2 miles long and starts at the upstream end of the camp area.

The Continental Divide Trail # 813 from Cumbres Pass to Dipping Lakes takes you to the summit of the Continental Divide. This section of the Continental Divide Trail traverses a unique terrain and intersects with other trails, allowing one to make side trips into the many drainages. To reach this section of the Continental Divide Trail, follow Highway 17 to the summit of Cumbres Pass. Just north of the summit, turn northwest onto Road #118, then take a left on the road which passes behind the old railroad station. The road starts near the vault toilet. This is a non-motorized trail.

The Continental Divide Trail # 813 from Cumbres to the New Mexico state line is a non-motorized trail that is a very scenic two-mile hike.

### Trails in Divide Ranger District

The Continental Divide Trail from Wolf Creek Pass north over Lobo Overlook follows the ridge along the Continental Divide and provides scenic overlooks. Wildlife is quite common. From the Continental Divide Trail travel on the South Fork Trail #750 down toward Spruce Lakes until you reach the Archuleta Trail #839 heading toward Big Meadows Reservoir. This trail is almost entirely within the Weminuche Wilderness and is foot and horse travel only.

The Continental Divide Trail south of Wolf Creek Pass is another alternative to travel south from Wolf Creek Pass on the Continental Divide Trail toward Elwood Pass. This trail travels along the Continental Divide Trail for beautiful scenic overlooks. The Continental Divide Trail passes about 1/4 mile west of the Elwood Cabin. The trail is in good condition and not extremely steep. It is open to both foot and horse travel. At Elwood pass, you have a choice of taking Forest Road 380 or continuing on the

Continental Divide Trail south into the south San Juan Wilderness where there are numerous trails which will lead you to the Conejos Canyon Road 250.

To reach the San Francisco Creek Trail #801 out of Del Norte, travel south of Del Norte on County Road 13 for 9 miles to the trailhead at Horseshoe Park. The trail splits there with a West Fork and Middle Fork. The West Fork is about 6-1/2 miles long and is motorized; the Middle Fork is about 6 miles long and is non-motorized. The middle Fork starts in a mixed conifer/aspen stand and continues along the Middle Frisco Creek until you reach San Francisco Lakes. Bennett Mountain nearby stands above 13,000 feet in elevation. The West Fork is a difficult ATV trail because of its narrow width. This trail goes all the way to Bennett Mountain. Spectacular views and diverse scenery await the visitor.

### Trails in Saguache Ranger District

Cotton Creek Trail #749 is reached by taking Double A road, also known as Mirage Lane Road east from Hwy 17 for 5 miles. Turn north on the gravel road for 2 miles. Turn east on the new access road to the trailhead. The trail is well marked and maintained. It follows the creek through a rugged steep canyon and has an unlimited supply of beauty. There is fishing in the creek and lakes, an abundance of wildlife, good camping sites along the trail, and accessibility to other trails. This trail is in the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness and is open only to foot and horse travel.

Wild Cherry Creek Trail #748 is reached by taking Mirage Lane Road east from Hwy 17 to where it meets Cherry Creek. The trail begins before the crossing. This trail offers the opportunity for a long day trip or for a pleasant overnight stay. It is well maintained and easy to follow. Attractions are the easy access, breath taking scenery, fishing in the lake, and the abundance of wildlife. There are also good camping sites along the trail. This trail is in the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness and is open only to foot and horse travel.

The San Isabel Trail #858 is reached by following the Crestone road east from Hwy. 17 at Moffat. Turn north at the Baca Grande airstrip and follow the gravel road to San Isabel Creek and the registration box. The trail is in the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness and is open only to foot and horse travel. The trail follows San Isabel Creek through stands of aspen and fir to its junction with the Lake Trail. The first 2 miles are in fair condition; the upper section is staked for a route but may not be fully constructed yet; it is a difficult passage for horses. Attractions are fishing in the creek and lakes, access to other alpine trails and lakes, abundance of wildlife, and heart pounding scenery.

## WILDERNESS

Wilderness areas are undeveloped, federally owned lands that possess outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. Wilderness areas are protected and managed to allow natural ecological processes to operate freely and contain ecological, geological or other features of scientific, educational, scenic or historical value. They allow plants and animals native to the areas to develop through natural processes and maintain watersheds and air sheds in healthy condition. Wilderness areas also protect threatened and endangered plant and animal species and maintain the primitive character. There are four wilderness areas on the Rio Grande National Forest.

The use of mechanized equipment is prohibited in wilderness areas. This includes chainsaws, motorbikes, snowmobiles, game carts, wagons, generators and mountain bicycles. Wheelchairs as a necessary medical appliance may be used.

Group size in Wilderness areas is limited to a maximum of 25 animals and people of which only 15 can be people. No permits are required for individuals to travel in wilderness areas. However, Outfitter/Guides are required to be licensed by the Colorado Outfitter/Guides Association and have a permit from the Rio Grande National Forest.

Landing of aircraft or dropping of materials, supplies, or persons from aircraft is prohibited.

The La Garita Wilderness has a total of 129,626 acres with 50,180 on the Rio Grande National Forest and 79,446 on the Gunnison National Forest. The La Garita Wilderness derives its name from the Spanish term for "The Overlook." Elevation ranges from 9,000 feet to over 14,000 feet. Snow can be expected in the upper reaches of the wilderness year-round. High temperatures may reach the low 70's and below freezing temperatures are not uncommon at night. The weather pattern is generally dry in June with rains moving into the area by early July when afternoon showers are likely. Lightning and hail are associated with afternoon thunderstorms and occasional snow showers are possible. Camps must not be closer than 300 feet from lakes. Horses may not graze or be picketed within this distance.

The Sangre de Cristo Wilderness was designated by Congress in 1993 and contains 218,922 acres with 98,842 acres on the Pike/San Isabel National Forest and 120,,080 acres on the Rio Grande National Forest. Sangre de Cristo is Spanish for "Blood of Christ" named by early Spanish explorers to this area. Several mountain peaks in this wilderness soar to over 14,000 feet



including Blanca peak, Crestone Needle, Crestone Peak, Kit Carson Peak and Challenger Peak. Over 225 miles of system trails are in the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness and the Great Sand Dunes National Monument lies adjacent to this wilderness. Nine peaks in the Rio Grande Forest boast over 14,000 feet.

The South San Juan Wilderness has 164,563 acres of which 88,,923 acres are on the Rio Grande National Forest and 75,640 acres are on the San Juan National Forest. This wilderness was established with enactment of the Colorado Wilderness Act in 1980 and enlarged in 1993. The Wilderness straddles the Continental Divide from Elwood Pass south to Trail Lake. There are 120 miles of trails through the wilderness area. Elevation ranges from 9,000 feet to over 13,000 feet. Weather can vary greatly, but generally, you can expect a cool mountain climate with scattered rain showers throughout the summer months. Normally, the wilderness area is snow free from mid-July to September. Lower elevations, 9,000 to 10,000 feet, my become snow free by early June, but some creek and river water levels will still be high. Points of interest include Summit Peak at 13,300 feet, Conejos Peak at 13,172 feet and many lakes.

The Weminuche Wilderness is one of the nation's largest wilderness areas. It was signed into law on January 4, 1975. It consists of 499,771 acres of which 164,995 acres are on the Rio Grande and 334,776 are on the San Juan. Nearly 470 miles of trails traverse this wilderness. There are private lands in the wilderness that are not open to public use without owner permission.

TRAVEL

Information on Colorado Road Conditions may be obtained by calling the Colorado Highway Department in Alamosa at (719) 589-9024. When traveling on the highways in the higher elevations in Colorado, remember that the roads can be dry one day and icy the next. A list of valuable items to have in your vehicle are: first aid kit, tire chains, blankets or sleeping bags, dry clothes, flashlights, water, nonperishable foods (nuts, dried fruits, candy bars), jumper cables, matches or a cigarette lighter. A shovel, a bag of cat litter, a piece of carpet or even a gallon of windshield washer fluid can be a valuable tool for getting unstuck.

Vehicular travel on the Rio Grande National Forest is restricted to Forest roads and trails with numerical designations. Authorized Open Roads are those roads on the Rio Grande National Forest that are open to both ATV travel and licensed vehicle travel. Motorized trails, marked with vertical numbers, are single-track trails open to licensed motorcycles and certain types of ATV's. Remember persons operating licensed vehicles on all Forest roads are subject to Colorado traffic laws and must have a valid driver's license. Persons operating an ATV on these Authorized Open Roads must have a driver's license or be over 10 years of age and be supervised (in visual contact) by another licensed ATV operator who has a valid license. Please drive safely while on the Forest.

Parts of the National Forest are closed to off-road motor vehicle use, or have seasonal restrictions in effect. Check with the Forest Supervisor or nearest District Ranger for current information on vehicle use. In any case, never operate a vehicle in a location or manner that damages soil, vegetation, or roads.

During the big game hunting season only, travel is allowed off designated Forest roads and trails, in some areas of the Rio Grande National Forest, to retrieve legally taken game animals from noon until dark only with All-terrain vehicles (ATV's) or small off-highway vehicles (not to exceed 48" in width with balloon tires and low tire pressure); not to include motorcycles. It is prohibited to transport weapons on ATV's while retrieving game off of Forest roads and trails. ATV’s should be driven in a manner that will not cause resource damage. Wet, steep areas should be avoided to prevent this kind of damage.

Colorado State Parks and Recreation requires your Off Highway Vehicle, any vehicle that does not have a state license place, to be registered either with Colorado or your home state. You may purchase your ATV Registration stickers at the Colorado Division of Parks and Recreations Offices, Sporting Goods Stores and ATV/OHV dealers. For further information, you may call (303) 791-1920.

Permanent Closures: Wilderness Areas are permanently closed to motorized vehicles and mechanized equipment, including bicycles. The Rio Grande National Forest includes the La Garita Wilderness, the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness, the South San Juan Wilderness and the Weminuche Wilderness.

Remember to respect private property when operating any kind of vehicle. You may only cross private land if an easement exists or you have the permission of the landowner. Check with the District Office to find out if easements exist to provide for access.

Reckless and Careless Driving on National Forest Roads: It is prohibited to operate a vehicle carelessly, recklessly or without regard to the rights or safety of other persons or in a manner or at a speed that would endanger or be likely to endanger any person or property.

HORSE TRAVEL

Keep stock 100 feet or more from lakeshores. Keep groups small and carry lightweight equipment to lessen resource damage. Use hitch lines, hobbles and pickets to constrain pack animals. Do not tie horses to trees. When leaving the area, remove (or scatter) manure and remove excess hay and straw as they do not deteriorate and leave an unsightly scar.

Noxious Weeds: To prevent the spread of noxious weeds, the only feed that will be allowed on Rio Grande National Forest are:

- 1. Colorado Certified Noxious Weed-Free Hay and/or Straw
- 2. Cubed hay
- 3. Pelletized hay
- 4. Steamed Grain
- 5. Mulch made from tree fibers or mulch that has been treated by steaming or other means to eliminate weed seeds.

Contact the Colorado Department Of Agriculture at (719) 852-3983 or in Denver at (303) 239-4150 for more information.

To bring horses into the state of Colorado, you must contact a veterinarian to get a Certificate of Health Inspection 30 days before entering Colorado. Horses also need a Coggins Blood test for equine infectious anemia within a year before coming here. Call the Colorado State Veterinarian's office at (303) 239-4161 for more information.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

The Rio Grande National Forest and adjacent Bureau of Land Management Land, offer virtually unlimited opportunities for "Fat Tire" bike enthusiasts. All trails and roads are open for mountain biking except those trails within designated wilderness areas, wilderness study areas and Wheeler Geologic Area.



BOATING AND RAFTING

The Rio Grande National Forest has several areas that provide opportunities for canoeing, kayaking, floating and the operation of small-motorized boats. Lakes and reservoirs are the best areas for motorboats and canoes. The Rio Grande River is a popular rafting area. Because of being shallow and having many boulders, the river is better suited for rafting than canoeing and kayaking, although it is used by all three types of boaters. The Conejos River has become a popular watercourse for small non-motorized watercrafts including canoes, kayaks, rafts, and inner tubes. Although the river is smooth and slow, there are several small rapids, which can present an exciting challenge, especially during spring runoff when the river is flowing, high and swift.

MOUNTAINEERING

Every kind of mountaineering challenge from easy walk-up to long technical climbs can be found on the Rio Grande National Forest. Technological advances in mountaineering and equipment innovations draw more visitors to the high country each year to discover the satisfaction in meeting the personal challenge of alpine hiking, snow and ice climbing, and rock climbing. Know the mountain and know the limits of your experience and physical condition before attempting routes. Experienced climbers appreciate that weather can change considerably during the length of a climb and watch the weather carefully. There are numerous 13,000 foot peaks on the Rio Grande National Forest.

Mountain Peaks over 14,000 on the National Forest are Blanca, Little Bear, Ellingwood, Crestone Needle, Crestone Peak, Kit Carson Peak and Challenger.

SNOWMOBILING

Snowmobiling is becoming one of the most popular winter sports in Colorado. Operate snowmobiles only on land and trails designated for their use. A free travel map is available from Forest Service offices which shows which areas are open for Snowmobile use. Snowmobiles, like ATV's, must be registered with Colorado State Parks or the owner’s home state. Snowmobiles operated between sunset and sunrise must have at least one headlight that illuminates objects 100 feet ahead and one red taillight that can be seen from 500 feet. Snowmobiles may not be used to hunt or harass wildlife. No one under the age of 10 may operate a snowmobile unless they are accompanied by someone 16 or older or someone 14 or older who is certified in snowmobile safety.

Cross-country travel is generally allowed in the winter by snowmobiles, but snowmobile travel is not permitted in sensitive wildlife habitat. These areas are identified on the National Forest map and Area Table. Specific snowmobiles routes through these areas may be designated; look for signs on the ground. Please remember, deer, elk and antelope are easily stressed during winter months because of extreme temperatures and lack of feed. Be sure to give these animals a wide detour at all times.



**SKIING AND SNOWSHOEING**

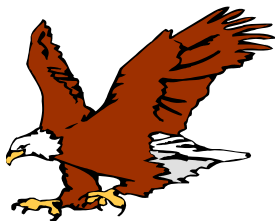
Cross-country skiing is becoming an increasingly popular sport on the Rio Grande National Forest. Past glacial activity in this area has produced wide valleys and gently rolling hills and plateaus, a terrain ideally suited to cross country skiing and snowshoeing. Many areas are accessible during the winter and offer excellent opportunities for both day and overnight trips.

Many of the unplowed roads that intersect the plowed roads make good ski and snowshoeing trails. In addition to unplowed roads, there are several ski routes specifically marked for cross-country skiers. The trailheads are marked with the cross-country skier symbol and the routes are designated by blue diamond markers. Snowshoeing opportunities are limited only by steep slopes and by road access to areas with deep snow. Cross-country skiing trails are suitable for snowshoeing. Areas recommended for skiing and snowshoeing include Wolf Creek Pass Area west of South Fork, Cumbres and La Manga Pass Area west of Antonito, Bonanza area west of Villa Grove, Spring Creek Pass near Creede, Pinos Creek area south of Del Norte and Rock Creek area south of Monte Vista.

Wolf Creek Ski area is a resort on the east side of Wolf Creek Pass on Highway 160 between South Fork and Pagosa Springs. This area receives an annual snowfall of 465 inches.

**ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES**

Archeological and historical sites hold clues to America's past. If disturbed, a part of our heritage may be lost forever. The Antiquities Act of 1906 and the Archaeological Resource Protection Act of 1979 protect cultural resources on public lands for the benefit of all Americans. If you discover such remains, help preserve America's cultural heritage by leaving them undisturbed and reporting them to the local ranger.



**BIRDING IN THE SAN LUIS VALLEY**

If you mention special birding places in North America to birders throughout the Country, you are very likely to hear Colorado as one of the favorites. Birders from all over the country travel to Colorado annually because of the

unique birding opportunities presented as the eastern plains give rise to the Rocky Mountains. More than 293 species have been recorded in this area. One can be seeing birds typical of the eastern part of the country and at the next moment, be seeing species typical of the mountains. For example, on a springtime day, one could be seeing the rare Bendire's thrasher near Del Norte and then be seeing the highly sought-after boreal owl at night in the mountains.

No less than 11 of the 14 species of owls in Colorado have been observed in the Valley and adjacent mountains. Since there are only 19 species of owls in North America, Colorado has more than its share of opportunities to see these unique birds. Owls of the Valley include the boreal owl, saw-whet owl, spotted owl, flammulated owl, long-eared owl, short-eared owl, great horned owl, barn owl, northern pygmy-owl, western screech-owl, and burrowing owl. Some of the rarest owls include the boreal, spotted, northern pygmy owl and the flammulated owls, and these are highly sought-after by birders across the Country.

Another unique factor is the Rio Grande River which acts as a migration corridor for species migrating from Central and South America and Mexico. The possibility for rare and unusual species is always present. Some examples of these types of birds include: rufous hummingbird, barn swallow, mountain bluebird, and American goldfinch.

For observing gulls, herons, ducks and shorebirds, the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge is an excellent place to begin your day. The rare whooping crane can be seen during spring and fall migration. The San Luis Lake State Recreation Area east of Mosca is also an excellent place for migrant water birds.

For upland birds, the Great Sand Dunes National Monument and the Rio Grande National Forest provide a number of birding opportunities that could produce some rare finds such as northern pygmy-owl, pinyon jay, Townsend's solitaire, canyon wren, and white-tailed ptarmigan. The Forest has developed a bird list and it is available upon request from the Monte Vista office.

**WILDLIFE**

Wild animals are the true residents of the Rio Grande National Forest. They thrive in its diverse terrain and vegetation. It is estimated that there are 280 different species of wildlife on the Forest. There are about 18,000 head of elk and 10,000 head of deer on the Rio Grande National Forest. The Forest contains 260,000 acres of big game (deer and elk) winter range. There are 150 streams and 80 lakes containing game fish on the Forest.

You never know when you might encounter a particular species; a lot of it depends on where you visit. In the campgrounds, you're likely to encounter such species as: squirrels, chipmunks, ravens, gray jays, and hummingbirds. Taking short walks in the woods can mean seeing deer and elk feeding in a meadow, beavers working in a stream, or woodpeckers pecking on trees in search of insects. Driving along the roads, a person might see a furry marmot scurrying across the road, bighorn sheep lounging around rocky hillsides, or golden eagles soaring on the thermal currents. For those folks who venture deeper into the woods, they might be lucky enough to see the usually shy animals like the black bear or mountain lion.

As commercial and residential development increases, wildlife habitat in the Forest becomes more valuable.

**HUNTING AND FISHING**

The Colorado Division of Wildlife manages fishing and hunting licenses and regulations. You must have a valid Colorado hunting or fishing license to fish or hunt on National Forests. The Rio Grande National Forest manages habitat for fish and wildlife in the forest. Constant cooperation is taking place between the Division of Wildlife and the Forest Service for the maintenance and improvement of the fisheries and wildlife habitat on the Forest. Information regarding seasons, bag limits, permit drawings, legal hours, and licenses may be obtained at all Division Offices and most sporting good stores. The main office of the Colorado Division of Wildlife is at 6060 Broadway, Denver, CO 80216. The telephone number for the local Colorado Division of Wildlife in Monte Vista is (719) 587-6900

Fishing: The Forest offers a variety of fishing experiences from high mountain lakes and streams to downstream rivers and reservoirs. Ice fishing in the winter is also becoming popular. Ice fishing should not be attempted on lakes unless the ice is at least five inches thick. Many areas are accessible only by foot or horseback while others are easily accessible by motor vehicle.

There are currently 13 different species of fish in the Rio Grande National Forest. The game fish are: Rio Grande cutthroat, Snake River cutthroat, Yellowstone cutthroat, Colorado River cutthroat, brown trout, rainbow trout, brook trout, Kokanee Salmon. The non-game fish are: Rio Grande sucker, Rio Grande chub, longnose dace, white sucker and flathead minnow.

Hunting: Wildlife management is an important part of the Forest Service's multiple use mission. Hunting is a tool of wildlife management used on the Forest and is regulated by Colorado Division of Wildlife. The Forest Service is responsible for managing much of the habitat utilized by these animals for food, water, and shelter.

Moose were released in the upper Rio Grande during 1992-1993 and have expanded into surrounding units. Please take care not to mistake a moose for an elk.

Know the hunting regulations before you set out into the field and always respect private property. You must obtain permission from landowners before hunting on private land adjacent to or within the National Forest Boundary.

Emergency Messages: Buckskin Network for Emergency Notifications in Colorado will broadcast emergency messages (death/serious illness) for hunters during regular big game seasons. These messages are broadcast by several radio stations at approximately 6 a.m., noon, and 6 p.m. Contact the Colorado State Patrol (Grand Junction office) at (303) 248-7278.

**CABINS FOR RENT ON THE FOREST**

Brewery Creek Guard Station Saguache Ranger District 46525 State Highway 114 Box 76 Saguache, CO 81149 (719) 655-2547	\$25.00/night, \$100 deposit Two rooms, Bunkbeds for 6, table, chairs, candles (no electricity), woodstove, firewood, water from hand pump, toilet near cabin
Carnero Guard station Saguache Ranger District Box 76 Saguache, CO 81149 (719) 655-2547	\$35.00/night, \$100 deposit, two rooms, handicapped accessible, heaters, refrigerator, water from hand pump, toilet near cabin
Elwood Cabin Conejos Peak Ranger District 15571 County Road T-5 La Jara, CO 81140 (719) 274-8971	\$20/night, no deposit, Large one room cabin, accommodates 4, wood stove, firewood, some dishes, toilet located near cabin



## HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Drinking Water:** All water in streams and lakes in the mountain should be treated before drinking. The most certain treatment to destroy giardia is to boil water for a least one minute. Boiling also will destroy other organisms causing waterborne disease. At high altitudes (above 10,000 feet), you should maintain the boil for 3 to 5 minutes for an added margin of safety. Chemical disinfectants such as iodine or chlorine tablets or drops are not yet considered as reliable as heat in killing giardia, although these products work well against most waterborne bacteria and viruses that cause disease.

**Hantavirus:** Hantavirus infection is a rare, life-threatening illness caused by inhaling the virus in airborne particles of rodent saliva, urine, or droppings. The Deer Mouse is the primary carrier of Hantavirus, but all rodents should be treated as potential carriers. Deer Mice are 4-9 inches long, head to tail, and pale gray to reddish brown except for their white belly and feet. Deer Mice love old cabins and lookouts as much as people do, so we need to be especially careful in forest buildings. Report heavy rodent activity to the Ranger Station so steps can be taken to eliminate the problem for future users.

**Colorado Tick Fever (Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever):** Colorado Tick Fever and Rocky Mountain Spotted fever are caused by the Colorado Wood Tick (Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever Tick) (*Dermacentor andersoni*). Symptoms of Colorado Tick Fever include high fever, muscle aches, headache, fatigue and general malaise. Colorado tick fever is a virus and the only treatment is rest and fluids. The disease lasts about four to five days. Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever is rare in Colorado. Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever is a rickettsial infection treatable with antibiotics. To prevent tick problems, avoid areas of high tick infestation, wear protective clothing and insect repellents containing DEET. Long pants should be tucked into boots. Conduct regular tick checks paying special attention to the hairline on the back of the scalp. To remove ticks, use tweezers and grasp the tick's head as close to the skin as possible. Do not twist or yank the tick out, instead use gentle but firm and steady pressure. Wash and disinfect the site of the bite. Do not prick, burn, or try to smother the tick, since this may cause the tick to regurgitate into the bite wound furthering chances of infection.

For further information, contact the CDC Voice Information System at (404) 332-4555, your physician, or your local health department.

## Bear Country

Black bears are generally shy and avoid human contact. However, there are some precautions you can take to avoid encounters with black bears if you camp and fish in bear country. You are responsible for doing all you can to prevent conflicts with bears. If a bear gets food from you, it's likely to behave more aggressively toward the next people it meets. Keep your camp clean. Store your food and garbage properly at all times. Store all your food and coolers in your car trunk or suspended from a tree at least 10 feet off the ground and 4 feet out from the tree trunk. Store toiletries with your food. Like other scents, the smell of toiletries may attract bears. Don't underestimate the ingenuity of a bear! Keep your tent and sleeping bag free of all food smells. Sleep well away from Food areas. Store the clothes you wore while cooking or eating with your food. Burn all grease off grills and camp stoves. Wipe table and clean up eating area thoroughly. Abstain from sexual activity as the odor attracts bears. Practice good personal hygiene.

Dispose of Garbage properly. Put it in bear-resistant garbage cans where available or secure it with your food and then pack it out. Don't burn or bury garbage. Bears will dig it up.

The Rio Grande National Forest, in cooperation with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, has established rules requiring the use of bear-resistant containers or bear resistant methods of storing food, garbage and other items that attract bears in certain areas of the Forest. This rule will also include any deliberate actions to attract bears. Check the bulletin board at the campgrounds to determine if bear resistant methods of food storage are required.

For more information on conditions at specific rivers, lakes or streams, contact the local sporting goods store or Ranger District Office.

## ROAD EASEMENTS FOR PRIVATE LAND

The opportunity to live adjacent to or within a National Forest would seem like an ideal situation, and it does offer many benefits. However it also means that "multiple use" such as hiking, camping, hunting, horseback riding and perhaps motorcycling, or jeeping, will be your next-door neighbor. In addition, "multiple use" can also include cattle or sheep grazing, timber harvesting, oil or gas drilling or ore mining.

Owners of private land within National Forest boundaries are legally entitled to: "reasonable use and enjoyment of private land as long as no damage is being done to National Forest lands and resources and no reduction of managements options of the Forest Service are taking place. Schedule a pre-application conference with the Forest Service office having jurisdiction over the federal land adjacent to your property. During this meeting, you will receive an information packet on how to submit an application and information on what types of easement are available. You cannot begin the

application process if you do not already legally own the private property for which you are seeking access.

Easement requests are prioritized according to the extent of public benefit. The entire process, including administrative review and environmental analysis, can take longer than one year to complete. Do not plan your building schedule prior to acquiring an easement. Any surface disturbance of federal land to access a building site is illegal before an easement is granted.

## PERMITS

Permits to gather forest products for personal use are available through the Forest Service. These permits include firewood permits for wood stoves and fireplaces. During the spring and fall, transplant permits are available for willow or fir trees. At Christmas time, permits are available to cut or dig up your own Christmas tree from National Forest lands. Other permits that are available include poles, fence stays, rails, teepee poles or rock permits. For further information about rules and prices, contact the local Forest Service Office.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

1. **Bonanza** is a historic mining town in the Cochetopa Hills west of Villa Grove. Bonanza is reached by heading west out of Villa Grove on County Road LL65.

2. **Great Sand Dunes National Monument** is a unique windblown dunes set against the Sangre de Cristos. There are two ways to get to the Sand Dunes. The first access is to take State Highway 17 north out of Alamosa until you reach the Six Mile Lane. Travel west on Six Mile Lane to State Highway 150. Head north into the Sand Dunes. The second access is to travel east of Alamosa on US Highway 160 to State Highway 150.

3. **Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge** is a waterfowl area located 6 miles south of Monte Vista on Colorado Highway 15. The refuge provides habitat for numerous bird species.

4. **Alamosa Wildlife Refuge** is located three miles southeast of Alamosa and features 11,168 acres of refuge bordering the Rio Grande River. This refuge provides habitat for numerous bird species including Canadian geese.

5. **Wagon Wheel Gap** is an early day landmark on the road to Creede. Wagon Wheel Gap is on Highway 149 between South Fork and Creede, Colorado.

6. **Creede Mining District** has active mines and a famous town including a famous underground mining museum and underground firehouse.

7. **Saguache Museum**, located on the main street in the town of Saguache, has interesting remnants of a long and colorful heritage.

8. **Summitville** is a historic mining town at the head of the Alamosa River. Gold and silver were discovered near Summitville in 1870, which began the mining rush to the area. There are several different routes into Summitville; therefore, it is best to check the National Forest map for your best access route.

9. **Elwood Pass** was an early route over the San Juan Mountains near Summitville. There are several different routes into Elwood Pass, therefore, check with the National Forest map.

10. **Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad** is a narrow gauge route between Chama, New Mexico and Antonito, Colorado.

11. **Fort Garland Museum** is an actual fort which was built in 1852 and commanded during part of the time by Kit Carson. Fort Garland museum is located one block south of Highway 160 on the west side of Highway 159.

12. **Rio Grande County Museum** in Del Norte has displays of Indian life and early pioneer life in the Del Norte area. A permanent exhibit entitled "Of Ice and Men" relating John Charles Fremont's disastrous 4th expeditions is located here.

13. **Silver Thread Scenic Byway** is a Forest Service National Scenic Byway and a Colorado State Scenic and Historic Byway. The Byway ribbons through the quaint historic communities of South Fork, Creede and Lake City. The Byway offers visitors spectacular scenery with interpretive signing about the people, history and natural resources of the area. The Scenic byway follows State Highway 149 out of South Fork through Creede and on to Lake City.

14. **Shrine of the Stations of the Cross**, formally known as "La Mesa de la Piedad y de la Misericordia," is a shrine on a mesa in the center of San Luis, Colorado's oldest town. The Stations of the Cross are a series of graphic meditations of the last hours of Christ's life, His judgment, sufferings, death and resurrection. The trail leading to the Shrine is under a mile long and culminates at a grotto of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Much of the information provided here was furnished in articles from the Colorado Division of Wildlife and the Rio Grande National Forest.

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